

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

University of Montana News Releases, 1928,  
1956-present

University Relations

---

3-18-1986

### "Cushy" professors' jobs take a lot of hard work, UM faculty say

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases>

## Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, ""Cushy" professors' jobs take a lot of hard work, UM faculty say" (1986). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 9991.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/9991>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Relations at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).



# University of Montana

Office of University Relations • Missoula, Montana 59812 • (406) 243-2522

## MEDIA RELEASE

CSW/vsl  
March 18, 1986  
State and weeklies  
profwork.rl

"CUSHY" PROFESSORS' JOBS TAKE A LOT OF HARD WORK, UM FACULTY SAY

By Carol Susan Woodruff  
UM News and Publications

For University of Montana professors, working long hours -- many of them at night, on weekends and during summers -- is a way of life.

Dick Solberg, UM associate academic vice president, estimates that the university's professors work an average of 50-55 hours a week -- not counting the many hours they spend reading literature related to their fields or helpful to their teaching.

Like Solberg, UM Faculty Senate Chairman Tom Roy says it's a common misconception among the general public that professors collect a tidy salary for putting in a small number of hours in the classroom. He compares professors to trial lawyers, who spend endless hours preparing a case before setting foot in court.

"Today, the number of hours teachers spend in the classroom may just be the tip of the iceberg," Roy says. "If one takes the teaching part of what one does seriously, there is a lot of time that has to be spent on preparation, meeting with students, grading papers, designing exams and staying current in the field."

Fellow Professor Bob Hausmann's schedule is testament to the hectic life of a professor. He prepares for a different linguistics class each quarter,

- more -



Profwork -- add one

supervises the English Department's teaching assistants and helps them find jobs, is chairman of the Linguistics Program and directs the English as a Second Language Program.

He's also an active member of a variety of faculty and university committees; gives public lectures that may take 65-70 hours to prepare; and advises many undergraduate and graduate students from several disciplines, in addition to being the adviser for Phoenix, the campus organization of older, "non-traditional" students.

"We're advisers, in one way or another, to every student we have," Hausmann says. "They don't just come in to discuss homework; they come in to discuss their lives. We function in many ways as surrogate parents or older brothers and sisters to students."

For Steve Sheriff, UM assistant professor of geology, competing nationally for research funding is a major and time-consuming part of his job. He says he spends an average of 80 hours preparing each grant proposal, and much of that time comes out of nights, weekends and summers. He does most of his research during the summers, too -- when he, like most UM professors, isn't on the university's payroll.

Receiving funding allows Sheriff to do field studies and lab work important to his teaching and to acquire modern equipment necessary to training students. "If your students are going to compete nationally or in the western United States for jobs, they'd better be up to snuff on equipment and modern ideas," he says.

Sheriff also stays busy with graduate admissions, running his department's earthquake lab and computer services, sitting on graduate



Profwork -- add two

committees, writing articles, dealing with the media, and attending professional meetings nationwide.

Of course, not all professorial activities have lofty goals or require years of professional experience. Many of them, such as typing, photocopying and answering phones, are tasks that in better economic times professors wouldn't have to spend so much time doing.

For example, due to a shortage of support staff for large introductory courses, UM Assistant Professor of environmental studies and botany Vicki Watson spends many hours preparing and cleaning up student labs. She says that on a recent Saturday, she devoted six hours to washing 240 flasks by hand.

Working on a Saturday is by no means a rare event for Watson, who teaches a 210-student lecture, is on faculty committees in two departments and is active in Montana environmental issues. Her workweeks typically range between 60 and 80 hours, she says, including 16-20 hours on weekends.

Doris Simonis, UM associate professor of education, also finds herself with an increasingly heavy load. The only UM professor specializing in science education, she says her advising load alone could keep one person busy full time.

She says that during winter quarter registration, she advised upward of 200 students -- besides maintaining her usual schedule of teaching; participating on faculty, university and graduate committees; and being active in state, national and international professional organizations.

"I easily put in 60 hours a week," Simonis says. "Ask my children. I'm probably developing into a workaholic. But if you're a good teacher, you're always working -- reading, thinking of new ways to teach, trying things out."



Profwork -- add three

UM faculty members are evaluated yearly by peers, department chairs and deans on the basis of their teaching, research or creative activity, and community service. Each quarter, their teaching is also evaluated by students. Receiving tenure, merit pay and promotions rests on good evaluations, so professors feel pressure to be active on campus and in the community.

Some professors are exhausted by their workload and wonder how long they can maintain their current pace. Others, like Sheriff, express contentment with the strenuous academic life.

"I really enjoy my job, so I don't count hours," he says. "It's a real privilege to have a career in something you really like to do."

#